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Ancient "Physic" vs. Health-Building

THE SCHOOL OF SALERNUM. The English Version. By Sir John Harrington. With Introductory Chapters by Francis R. Packard, M. D., and Fielding H. Garrison, M. D. and Hoebel, New York.

OPTIMISTIC MEDICINE. By a Former Insurance Man. F. A. Davis Company, Philadelphia.

Reviewed by

STANTON A. COBLENTZ.

There are perhaps few fields in which mankind has made vaster progress than in medicine. There are likewise few fields in which greater advances seem still imminent. From primitive superstition to modern science is a tremendous step; from modern science to that of the future may be an even more stupendous stride. Among the uncivilized medicine is commonly identified with religion; disease is regarded as the work of evil spirits, and the art of healing consists in the exorcising of those spirits, whether through the beating of tom-toms, the singing of songs or the incantations of the medicine man. Even after mankind had become civilized much of the primitive attitude toward the human body persisted; for many centuries medicine was treated more as a thing of magic than of scientific accuracy; even the learned were appallingly ignorant of the functioning of their own bodies, and among the untutored the most intense superstition prevailed.

Nor has this antique superstition been entirely dissipated by modern scientific achievements; knowledge continues to be the property of the few rather than the possession of the many; and the processes of nature, and in particular those processes as manifested in the human frame, are still vaguely looked upon as belonging to the miraculous and the inexplicable. To this very day the physician is frequently regarded as somewhat of a magician rather than as a student of natural laws; in some mystical manner he is supposed to charm forth from the elements the secret of healing; and the average man does not attempt to understand that his methods are not supernatural, nor to apply those methods toward the prevention of disease as the physician does toward its cure.

These and similar thoughts will occur to any one who reads the medical theories of the Medieval School of Salerno, and then turns to such a modern book as "Optimistic Medicine." In the former he will be confronted with beliefs almost primitive in their crudeness; in the latter he will find himself face to face with a well developed science, which nevertheless seems to have boundless prospects for future growth. And the contrast between the knowledge of the past will strike one as little less than marvelous.

There is something particularly instructive about the principles of the school of Salerno, not because of the information they present, but because of the misinformation. These medical theories seem to be a mere jumble of rules, often fancifully conceived, and evidently bearing no relation to actual experience. Their unsound basis will be apparent from a mere statement of the fact that they are set forth in verse, which makes it literally true that remedies were regulated according to the rhyming of words. One wonders whether medieval physicians ever employed drugs that did not have good rhyming qualities, or whether they might not have been tempted to recommend cheese because it rhymed with peas, or strychnine because it rhymed with wine.

The following is typical of the medicine of Salerno:

Some to drink only water are assigned,
But such by our consent shall drink alone.

For water and small beer we make no question,
Are enemies to health and good digestion;

And Horace in a verse of his rehearses
That water-drinkers never make good verses.

Much of this verse sounds as if it were not made by water drinkers. From its general tone one would not be surprised to learn that a movement had been started by the physicians of

Take Care of the Teeth

TEETH AND HEALTH. By Thomas F. Ryan, D. D. S. G. P. Putnam's Sons.

A personal talk with Dr. Ryan supplemented the impression created by his book. "When I began practicing dentistry eighteen years ago," said Dr. Ryan, "we used to say that the proper time to begin taking regular care of the teeth was when the second teeth made their appearance. Within the last few years ideas in dentistry have changed considerably and we have been cautioning people to pay as much attention, if not more, to the first teeth. Now, let me add, however radical it may sound, that real preventive dentistry ought to begin not with the child, not even with its mother, but with the grandmother."

"Every woman whose daughter is to bring a new life into the world ought to see to it that the daughter understands certain simple physiological truths about the teeth."

"Teeth do not begin to develop at birth, as some believe. About thirty weeks before the birth of the child a tissue, called the 'dental band,' forms on what is subsequently to become the jaws of the new baby. The incipient teeth are nourished by the mother's food. It is the physician's job to decide what this food should be. All the dentist asks is that it should contain plenty of lime and the mineral salts that are the foundation of good, firm tooth structure."

A considerable portion of "Teeth and Health" is devoted to the tracing of serious diseases to bad teeth. Only within the last few years, the author contends, has the real significance of tooth decay and of infections around the gum margins of the roots of the teeth been understood. These infections frequently are present even when there is no severe pain involved. Nature's reminder at times is no more than an occasional twinge, and where the person who is subject to these occasional slight pains happens to be in poor health, a visit to a laboratory for the purpose of having the teeth X-rayed is urged. Many an examination of this kind has revealed startling things—at the roots of dead teeth, or about an imperfectly filled root canal, an improperly fitted crown or a defective piece of bridge work. Infection from these areas may result in crippling attacks of rheumatism and other troubles not usually laid to the teeth. Scientific experiments recently performed indicate that backward and forward children frequently can be

the time to prohibit the imbibing of anything non-alcoholic.

Milk would doubtless have come under that prohibition, for in one place we read the warning:

Eat not of milk, nor ought of milk compounded.

That the medical theories of the day were grounded not only in superstition but in the grossest ignorance will be evident from these lines:

Three special months (September, April, May),
These are in which 'tis good to ope a vein.

There follows specific information regarding blood letting, a now discredited practice that survived long after the School of Salerno. This remedy was to be employed on the first day of May or the last day of April or September, and therein we discover that the old physicians were almost 1 per cent. accurate, for to be entirely correct they need only have extended the prohibition to the other 362 days.

Occasionally, however, we find a hint that they did not consider their knowledge unbounded. In many respects the following lines still apply: Dame Nature's reason far surmounts our own;

We feel effects the causes oft unknown.
And sometimes we come across an epigrammatic utterance flavored with a whiff of perhaps unconscious humor. Here is an example:

A King that cannot rule him in his diet
Will hardly rule his Realm in peace and quiet.

Diametrically opposite is the book on "Optimistic Medicine." Inadequate as it was, Medieval medicine was mainly the possession of the learned; in this modern book we have a plea to

made normal by the correction of dental defects. Dr. Ryan regards as particularly important the experiment performed in the Marion School in Cleveland. The subjects were forty children whose teeth were in bad condition. All the children were chosen from classes between the fourth and eighth, for the reason that below the fourth they could not intelligently cooperate and above the eighth they would be too soon graduated, so that the statistical value of the experiment would be lost. The test was to prove—if it was susceptible of proof—the efficacy of a healthy mouth condition and its effect in maintaining a high order of physical and mental development.

These children's teeth were treated by experienced dentists, they were made to clean their teeth regularly and their diet was regulated. At the end of a year the average mental gain, according to Dr. Waller's psychological tests, was 9.8 per cent. There was also a great increase in self-respect and a material reduction in the tendency toward truancy and disobedience. And, most important of all, there was a remarkable improvement in the health of these children. Several girls who had started the tests with sallow complexions and pimply faces at their conclusion had clear skins and rosy cheeks. One child, who had suffered greatly from flatulence and sick headache, was entirely relieved.

Dr. Ryan believes that one of the reasons for so much poor dental health in America is poor food. Most people do not realize that the teeth, like the rest of the body, are nourished by the food we eat. We consume too much refined sugar and should substitute brown sugar wherever possible. We also eat too much "pap," by which the author means breakfast cereals and other demineralized food substances, including white bread and meat—which later is emphatically deficient in lime salts and other tooth-building materials. Even vegetables as they are ordinarily cooked—with the skins removed and the valuable cell salts thrown down the kitchen sink—are lacking in these valuable substances. Vegetables properly cooked are of great importance in the development of dental health.

"Teeth and Health" contains much valuable information on the proper care of the teeth. The author has wisely refrained from bewildering his reader with technical terms and his book can be understood by any one.

It is these toxins which are the main factor in producing the phenomena of old age. When, therefore, the body is underoxygenated or overfed, it is not able to keep up the daily restitutions which are necessary to keep the balance of health secure, and autointoxication and subacidosis ensue, with their train of ills.

Dr. Carroll devotes two chapters called "Foods That Wreck and Pleasure and Profit in Eating" to a sound, scientific, physician's statement of the errors and dangers of wrong eating, of overeating and of the meaning and value of a balanced diet. In this he is never "faddy" or exaggerated, but always moderate and convincing.

The chapter on work and exercise gives excellent prescriptions for the muscular health of the sedentary worker, and following chapters give attention to the mental and spiritual strands which enter into the making of a vigorous and successful old age. In each of these subjects Dr. Carroll is clear, definite and helpful, and especially is encouraging to those who in late middle life realize their earlier physiological sins and desire to atone for them. This may be done "unless some vital organ is disabled," he assures us, "the average man of affairs and his wife can double, yes, often treble their physical reserve, can increase severalfold their vital capacity as late as sixty."

Many people, and in particular the "rushed business man," argues the author, will not give to their own bodies the attention that they would not think of refusing to a house requiring fire insurance; and the result is often physical or nervous wreckage or preventable death. The solution, in the author's opinion, is not to be found so much in superior skill among physicians after disease has manifested itself as in the safeguarding of the patient's health by medical advice while apparently he is perfectly well. For the physician should be something more than a policeman called upon when trouble actually appears; he should be the constant friend and adviser of his patients; he should be acquainted with their family histories and with some details of their personal lives; he should be able to give them the benefit not only of his general knowledge, but of the adaptation of that knowledge to the specific cases before him. Added to that, he should be a man capable of seeing "the silver lining" to a cloud; he should not depress his patients by his gravity, but bolster them up by his cheerfulness. "It is natural," says the author, "that some physicians should be optimistic and others pessimistic, but the pessimistic doctor should change his business."

In such a vein the author continues for many pages, dealing with immunity to disease, childhood, adolescence, overwork, worry, "mental torture of the body" and similar subjects. If in his discussion there is some implied criticism of the physician, the book as a whole is an exaltation of the medical profession, and points to an era when the physician shall play a part as far in advance of that which he now holds as his present position is superior to that of the medieval verse-writing practitioner.

Books and Trees

Much is written about trees. All books, except the finest, are printed on them, for books are made of paper, and modern paper is made of wood. Experts have computed to what extent the forests supply us with fiction.

Some years ago nine popular novels were published which reached a total sale of sixteen hundred thousand copies. Since the average weight of a book is from a pound to a pound and a half, we can compute that the nine novels took about two million pounds of paper. A manufacturer of paper says that the average spruce tree yields about five hundred pounds of paper. Consequently the nine novels felled four thousand trees, besides committing other sins against nature. Some books are worth more than four thousand trees, but it is feared these may be counted upon one's fingers.

The Simple Science of Staying Young

OLD AT FORTY OR YOUNG AT SIXTY. By Robert S. Carroll, M. D. The Macmillan Company.

Dr. Carroll has written several helpful books for invalids, notably those suffering from nervous disorders, and in this new volume he seeks the wider circle of those who are stepping toward the decades that lie between forty and sixty, or who are already treading their somewhat dubious highways. We say "dubious" advisedly, for Dr. Carroll makes it very clear that "the sixties" will mark for us either defeat or triumph, according to the manner in which we have conformed to the teachings of this "science of growing old," as he calls it.

We age differently, he says. Some of us lose our spiritual fires first, even in youth, as the prophet clearly understood when he wrote that the young men should see visions, but the old only dream dreams. Many of us begin to age mentally after thirty-five years, when crystallization sets in and the mind settles into a comfortable satisfaction. In the body, happily, the capacity for physical readjustment lingers long. "Failure of body," says the author, "the failure we call age, indicates always that the balance between the vital organs and the work thrown upon those organs, is breaking"—this work being that of the elimination of the poisonous by-products which are constantly forming in our bodies through faulty metabolism.

In the very simplicity of the remedy for this lies its own defeat, like the washing in Jordan. The oxygenation of the lungs by fresh air, simple, adequate food and exercise are all that is required. The exercise has two purposes—the necessary oxygenation of the body and the breaking up of bodily toxins through perfect oxidation. The oxygenation of the body is by no means merely a matter of breathing air into the lungs. "We may take deep breathing exercises until we are giddy with oxygen intoxication and increase but a small fraction the total amount of oxygen in our bodily tissues," says Dr. Carroll. This must be done through active muscular exercise. The proper oxidation which follows will both reduce the amount of toxic matter formed in the system and even utilize those already found.

It is these toxins which are the main factor in producing the phenomena of old age. When, therefore, the body is underoxygenated or overfed, it is not able to keep up the daily restitutions which are necessary to keep the balance of health secure, and autointoxication and subacidosis ensue, with their train of ills.

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Dream-Values In Early Youth

CHILDREN'S DREAMS. By Dr. C. W. Kimmins. Longmans, Green & Co.

The Freudian researches in the world of the unconscious have influenced a host of other attempts to interpret dreams according to their significance in the conscious world. Most of these have centered on neurotic cases. Now comes a study by Dr. C. W. Kimmins of normal dream life, based upon research among 6,000 English children of varied ages.

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Dr. Kimmins emphasizes the part played by the dream as an antidote to the monotony of life. Without dreams life would be far more wearisome. The author contends that the non-dreamer grows old more quickly than the dreamer.

With very poor children, Dr. Kimmins finds, "the dream comes in as the Fairy Godmother and supplies to them the pleasures which the normal conditions of their lives have failed to provide. This is well illustrated by the dreams of industrial school children, who, as is pointed out, have far happier and more exciting dreams than those whose lives are full of interest and for whom the lines have fallen in pleasant places."

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